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ABSTRACT

As costs for higher education increase and traditional state appropriations formulae, in which dollars follow student/semester credit hours, are often no longer in use, educational institutions are being asked to provide higher quality services with flat or even slightly reduced budgets. To meet these needs, department chairs and deans need to combine traditional leadership qualities with an entrepreneurial spirit. Traditional leadership requires strategic thinking, removing obstacles, developing ownership, and taking self-directed actions to move institutions ahead. Entrepreneurs must be able to take risks, assess input, and make decisions, and they should have courage, a competitive spirit, intuition, and the ability to make good decisions with incomplete information. Further, entrepreneurial leaders must quickly assess situations, build consensus, visualize a plan, communicate the plan, and seek the necessary resources to implement the plan. Leaders must also push their faculty to demonstrate more initiative, risk-taking, and resourcefulness. While leaders should strive to consolidate their power in difficult times, they must balance this with efforts to properly delegate responsibility within the institution. Finally, entrepreneurial leaders must be supportive of those higher up in the institution, and they must foster a willingness to provide superiors the benefit of the doubt about their decisions. (MAB)

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THE CHAIR/DEAN AS ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADER:

HOW TO INCREASE SUPPORT AND FUNDING FOR YOUR DEPARTMENT OR AREA

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JC 960 285

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Terry L. Barnes has been an educator for 25 years, of which 16 dedicated to community colleges. Presently, Barnes is the vice president for instruction at Westark Community College in Fort Smith, Arkansas. Westark is the largest community college in Arkansas serving over 5,500 credit, 7,000 continuing education (non-credit) and 7,000 trainees in the Business and Industrial Institute. The college is organized into eight credit divisions, including 120 full-time and 125 part-time instructors. The college budget is in excess of $20 million.

Dr. Barnes received his Ph.D. in community college administration and vocational education from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, in 1979. He earned a M.B.A. (1972) and B.S. degree in Marketing (1970) from Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville.

Dr. Barnes has served as the chief academic officer at Westark Community College since 1992; five years at Northeastern Junior College, Starling, Colorado; and four years at Iowa Central Community College, Fort Dodge, Iowa. Barnes was the first director of admissions and records at Metropolitan Community College, Omaha, Nebraska, from 1974-1977. Prior to arriving on the Westark Community College campus, Dr. Barnes was the associate vice president for academic affairs at Northwest Missouri State University.

Barnes regularly consults with Arkansas community colleges and the Arkansas Board of Higher Education. He teaches graduate and undergraduate courses whenever possible.

The Chair/Dean as Entrepreneurial Leader:
How to Increase Support and Funding for Your Department/Area

INTRODUCTION

Here is the question. "What is the future of your community college and your department in particular?" Community colleges must change quickly and dramatically, to not only educating more people, but more economically, and more effectively. Department chairs are in a pivotal position to influence change and guide faculty to new levels of support and funding.

Higher education and indeed community colleges are facing an era of change, both internally and externally. Politicians, the public, state coordinating agencies, and students are demanding more of higher education than ever before. They want measurable evidence of productivity and improvements in quality. The belief is that our instructional programs should be accountable through efficient and timely instruction and for producing a high quality, competitive workforce.

The tuition costs of higher education have increased more rapidly than other sectors, and in some cases out-pacing the rising costs of health care. At the same time, sources of funding are shrinking. The traditional state appropriations formula where dollars follow students/semester credit hours, is often no longer the case. Alternative sources of revenue are being sought and the internal redistribution of funds among programs is prominent when there are no new additional dollars available.

Your faculty know, and are probably requesting of you, to find funds for your department to support rapid changes in technology, computers, software, networking, and restructuring educational delivery systems. At the same time your community college is facing the resource realities--finances, facilities, equipment, campus maintenance, technology investments, and personnel--required to maintain the status quo, in addition to moving your institution somewhat forward.

Your institution, and your department, are being asked to provide higher quality services with flat or even slightly reduced budgets. This leads to serious administrative concerns, and seeks answers to the following types of questions: How can I be effective as a chair, when I can't get the resources my department wants? How can I convince my upper level administrators what I need, and get it? How can I possibly do more with less? How can I keep my faculty satisfied, or convinced otherwise? How can we improve the quality of services within my department?

The term leadership means making it possible for others above you and the faculty below you to follow you. Leadership is thinking strategically and focusing on the right direction, removing obstacles, developing ownership, and taking self-directed actions to move your department ahead. Entrepreneurial skill means taking risks, listening to input, making decisions, and living with the consequences. An entrepreneur is one who's job is to find the future. To do that, the chair must have courage, competitive spirit, intuition, and the ability to make good decisions with incomplete information. Good leadership means taking your faculty from success to success--not from crisis to crisis. Good leadership is correctly seeing the future, and arriving at the right time. Entrepreneurship is getting to the future before your faculty want to. Entrepreneurship is picking out several paths to get to the future, and allowing the faculty to find the best one that fits their style.

TRAITS FROM THE TRENCHES

Over the years, this community college administrator has noted several traits that make outstanding department chairs. Some are rather "textbook-ish," but nevertheless true; some are based on experience and intuition. Lacking some of these traits, or behaving less usually yields a mediocre department manager, rather than a super entrepreneurial leader. Here they are:

- An unusual ability to gain confidence and trust from the faculty and the upper administrators alike.
- An understanding of a participative leadership style that stresses shared governance, full disclosure, and bottom up/inside out communication and decision-making.
- A personal habit of constantly reading, and communicating the literature of education, teaching, learning, and assessment.
- An ability to coach, teach, and mentor with clarity and conciseness. Questions are probed, not for the purpose of humiliation, but to exercise the brain muscle.
- Day-to-day decision-making is skillful and well-thought-out.
- Available to faculty and students that is commensurate with listening, openness, honesty, and forthrightness in solving concerns.
- An understanding of and respect for the cultures and traditions of the organization.

- An ability to think through, anticipate, and execute routine operational matters.

- An adherence to existing policies, procedures, and practices.

- "Rugged individualism" and commitment toward the higher education profession/industry--a real business sense.

- An ability to effectively articulate the literature, and professional matters to faculty and administrators.

- A clear community college philosophical grounding.

- A strong tireless work ethic, where the energy and time expended are interpreted as: "He/she leads by example."

- An ability to bring problems to a head with the best alternative solution recommended among many.

- An ability to recognize and discern an "educational fad" when it is seen.

- An ability to quantify recommendations with cost/revenue analysis, cost/benefit analysis, cost/effectiveness analysis.

- An ability to keep the chief academic officer informed about the "good" and tips off where the "alligators" are lurching.

- Is big enough to ask for help. You can be a better subordinate if you are not too proud, or too afraid to let your boss know that you are having trouble.

- A prudence to not edit, sanitize, or give "safe", "acceptable," or "what the president's cabinet wants to hear;" always speak the truth of convictions.

- Is loyal to the president's cabinet first and the faculty last.

- Aggressively sets department goals that are realistic, achievable, and congruent with the chief academic officer's; works hard to achieve the goals on time in high quality manner.

This list is by no means exhaustive or a revelation. However, chairpersons are go-betweens and representative of both the administration and their departments. Sometimes the two may be in conflict, which is why the position is so difficult. The paradox is that the effective leader/entrepreneur must always

speak the best of the administration and put its decisions in the best possible light and always vigorously defend the department and the faculty before the administration. A good rule of thumb is to remember that there will always be plenty of supporters for the administration, but the department chair is the single spokesperson for the department and its interests.

CASE STUDY

Let us assume that you have just been named as a new chair of your department. It is not unlike most, but has a certain uniqueness. The faculty are in their late 40's to early 50's, with one or two in their late 20's. The department faculty is composed of say 20 full-time faculty, 60 percent are tenured, 7 have doctorates, and 23 or so are part-time. You could easily convert the part-time positions into at least 6 full-time faculty persons, but have been told that there is not the money. The faculty mainly are still committed to good teaching, but somewhat complacent. Faculty development funds have been meager, but two or three faculty really want to start experimenting with media-based instruction.

Your faculty have a good reputation on campus, with the exception of one male teacher who you suspect is sexually harassing female students. Nevertheless, the faculty are clear about their roles and expectations and you can depend on them to do a good job. While instruction is adequate, few if any attempts have been made to energize the faculty toward initiating new methodologies, teaching strategies, or assessment techniques for improving instruction. The faculty is generally comfortable; they maintain office hours, and do a pretty good job with student academic advisement. They complain mildly about their teaching schedule, but are pretty clear about their roles and expectations. Student evaluations of instruction among each faculty member usually meet or exceed expectations. Two or three of the tenured faculty members have persistent problems with teaching each semester, but not bad enough to dismiss them, but nagging students as your customers of learning.

The laboratories are equipped by early 1970's standards. The faculty complain that certain pieces are aging and need up-grading. What computers you have in your department are mostly 386's with a few 486's. Faculty do not have computers on their personal desks. The curriculum is somewhat stale, but continues to transfer okay. The department has not had an articulation meeting with the major transfer university department in years. Your transfer course enrollments are sufficient, but your AAS occupational enrollment numbers are slipping. In fact, the number of graduates from the AAS degree programs assigned to your area have fallen below a critical level as mandated by your state's accountability standards.

THE STRATEGIC SOLUTION

For many of you, you have been in your job about eight months, and probably wonder how you have survived. Mainly you have been trying to fit (or discover) your management style into the organization above you, and at the same time getting the most done with who you are you want. Your goal has been to articulate a vision or goal for the future, and have the tenacity to make that vision a reality.

Using the case study example above, there are some major challenges facing you–

. How do you keep the good people motivated, and recharge them to become even better?

. How do you overcome resistance to change?

. How do you articulate a vision?

. How do you generate commitment from your faculty and above you?

. How do you implement your vision?

. How do you get the results your chief academic officer wants from you and your department?

. How do you get the support and financial resources NOW or in the future to accomplish your vision?

The department and the college really needs you now, despite the stress of the change. You will find that times of transition, change, and newness are on your side. When you come in, quickly assess the situation, build consensus, visualize a plan, communicate the plan, ask for financial support from above. Results often happen because of your newness or previous inactivity. Administrators frequently give away power and become more tentative during times of significant organizational change. When you are entrepreneurial, you are NOT more cautious, more careful, or more uncertain regarding the extent of authority and decision-making latitude. The entrepreneurial leader does NOT sit around waiting for permission to move out. Instead, you should assume a proactive stance. Empower yourself, and more importantly, involve your faculty.

In times like these, you need to push the faculty (and yourself) to demonstrate more initiative, risk-taking, and resourcefulness. It is generally more acceptable to commit sins of omission, rather than sins of commission. You do not want to

be caught doing nothing, rather than risk doing wrong. Think of your department as a "for-profit" business.

It is generally accepted that you should not try to cover all the bases yourself. There are two particularly good reasons why you should concentrate on effective delegation as department chair. First, it can keep you from spreading yourself too thin, and becoming too scattered. Second, good delegation gives your faculty a sense of involvement. Good delegation lets your faculty feel a little more in control of circumstances and events. It adds to their sense of participation, giving them the feeling that they have more choices and more influence. As a result, they are likely to feel better about final decisions that are made, and show more commitment in carrying them out, or understand if the support or funding was not approved.

It is so very important to be supportive of the president's administrative team. Just as you particularly need the support of your faculty these days, so do your superiors need your backing. It is highly recommended that you be forgiving of errors by the chief academic officer or other vice presidents, or what looks like faulty/inept management. What you might consider a mistake may be precisely the right move, or at least the best move under the circumstances and situation. Keep in mind that higher leaders can see things from a different perspective, and they usually have access to important information that you do not have. Common sense suggests that this is not an argument for blind loyalty on your part, but rather for a willingness to give your superiors the benefit of the doubt--with or without receiving financial support from your request.

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